



# The journey home

By Huang Daohen

At 5 am on Tuesday, Wu Youcai went to Beijing West Railway Station to wait for the ticket counter to open.

It was the second time the 34-year-old worker from Sichuan Province had attempted to get a train ticket home.

By the time Wu arrived, there were already long lines of people camped out in front of the ticket booths.

The waiting area beside the ticket windows was full of passengers, mostly factory workers, waitresses and waiters, carrying large bundles of luggage and bags of instant noodles.

Tuesday probably wouldn't be Wu's lucky day. Screens above the ticket window warned that few tickets remained for his route.

He didn't seem surprised.

"It has been a whole year since I've been home. This is my chance to go back and see my children," Wu said. He has a five-year-old daughter and a two-year-old son.

Though making the journey home is difficult, few migrant workers are willing to abandon hope and remain in the city. They work throughout the year to support their families, and Chinese New Year is the ultimate time for reunion.

As he waited in line, Wu began planning for what he would do at home. He said he wanted to help his parents clean their home, go shopping with his children and eat lots of dumplings.

The Spring Travel rush began on January 8. Over the next several weeks, Wu and million of other college students and migrant workers will return home for the holidays in what is the world's largest human migration.

The traffic authorities estimate there will be a total of 3.16 billion passenger trips during the coming 40 days.

Railway travel remains the main way people choose to return home.

However, with the launch of a new online ticket booking system and new tickets tied to the passenger's name, the journey home is somewhat different from previous years.

Read more on Page 3



A young couple board a train at the Kunming Railway Station to head home for the holidays on Monday. Long Yudan/IC Photo



Page 11

## Changed by city life

This breakthrough film by a young director explores how city work can strain the bonds of rural love.



Page 5

## Protesters fight fur

Animal activist group PETA is hoping to get young Chinese on board with its anti-fur message.



# Masked do-gooders aid migrants, homeless

By Wu Tong

A woman in a low-cut, mysterious outfit drew attention on Christmas Eve when she showed up at the Silk Street market, Xidan and Wangfujing to hand out coats, food and other daily necessities.

But it was not the first time a superhero stepped out of the comics to help in the real world. Last May, a woman in Hong Kong, dressed in skin-tight black clothes and a blue mask, hit the streets to distribute food and money to the needy.

The Hong Kong woman called herself "Lady Bauhinia," after the flower of Hong Kong. Now, it seems that her work is spreading to Beijing.

The microblog for "Beijing Bauhinia" has already attracted 37,000 followers, but not all of them appreciate her work – some criticize her revealing outfit and copycat persona.

"The girl really wants to be famous," said Han JuClub, one of her Weibo followers. "It's really shameful to take advantage of the homeless to promote oneself."

But many, like Du Shu, another follower on Weibo, applaud her work. "Honestly, I don't care about whether she just wants to be famous or truly wants help the needy. After all, she did do good things. That's something our apathetic society needs desperately."

Social apathy has been a hot issue since last October, when 18 people stepped over the broken body of a two-year-old girl without stopping to give aid. The girl's death exposed the ugly side of Chinese society.

Wang Lei, a bank clerk in his mid-20s,



The sexy superhero became an overnight Internet celebrity. Photos provided by Weibo.com

said Beijing Bauhinia helps draw attention to the needy with her high-profile approach and microblog. "I hope we can have more superheroes like her," he said.

Wang may get his wish.

While Beijing Bauhinia has been silent for the last three weeks, a new "Magic Jiong-jiong" has stepped up to follow her work. The young man, dressed in a cowboy hat and black cloak, has been helping migrant workers buy train tickets and distributing quilts to the homeless.

Many are hoping to learn more about the people behind the masks, but the city's "superheroes" have chosen to remain hidden.

"I have my principles, and one of them is that I won't reveal my identity," Beijing Bauhinia said on her microblog.

"I know some people say I am just doing this to be famous. I see it differently. I think it's necessary to do something strange to draw attention back to the charity. One day, you'll be able to see the positive effect of what I'm doing."



## Brief

### New dragon stamp criticized

A stamp designed to mark the upcoming Year of the Dragon is drawing unusual criticism for its fang-bearing monster.

The stamp went on sale last Thursday to the heavy crowds that normally flock to buy Lunar New Year stamps. However, the dragon's confrontational pose on this year's stamp has led some people to call it too ferocious.

Zhang Yihe, a renowned Chinese writer, wrote on her Sina Weibo that she was "scared to death" when she first saw the red and yellow creature with scales and claws.

Another writer, Tan Xudong, called it an "incomparably ugly dragon-year stamp."

Its designer, Chen Shaohua, said he had received as much criticism as he has support. Chen defended his design, saying that the dragon should be interpreted as a symbol of China's rising confidence.

"As a large country which has major influence in the world, China is ushering in the restoration of national confidence," he wrote on his blog.

"To represent China's self-confidence, a tough, powerful, stern and confident dragon is the appropriate choice," he wrote.

Chen said that his design is derived from the pattern on "dragon robes" worn by Chi-



The controversial dragon stamp

Photo provided by Beijing Youth Daily

nese emperors – whose symbol was the dragon – during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and a screen featuring dragons in a Beijing park that was a pleasure ground for the emperor.

Mythical legends say Chinese people are descended from the dragon, and many consider it an auspicious symbol.

The controversial dragon stamp is already ushering in good fortune for some. One stamp seller

was reportedly selling a set of 20 for 178 yuan – much higher than the 24 yuan face value.

### Work begins on world's highest airport

Construction will begin in 2013 on the world's highest airport in Nagqu county, Tibetan Autonomous Region. The airport will be 100 meters higher than the existing record holder in another part of the remote region.

Nagqu airport will be 4,436 meters above sea level, slightly higher than the airport in Qamdo town at 4,334 meters, Xinhua reported.

The airport will cost 1.8 billion yuan and is expected to open in three years, it reported.

Tibet currently has five civilian airports, at least two of which are only open for a few months of the year because extreme weather makes flying impossible the rest of the time.

The country has embarked upon a multi-billion-yuan program to revamp old airports and build new ones, especially in the country's remote west, to boost the economy in the interior.

The government says that the new airports, roads and railway to Tibet will promote development and help raise living standards.

(Agencies)



# A nation in migration

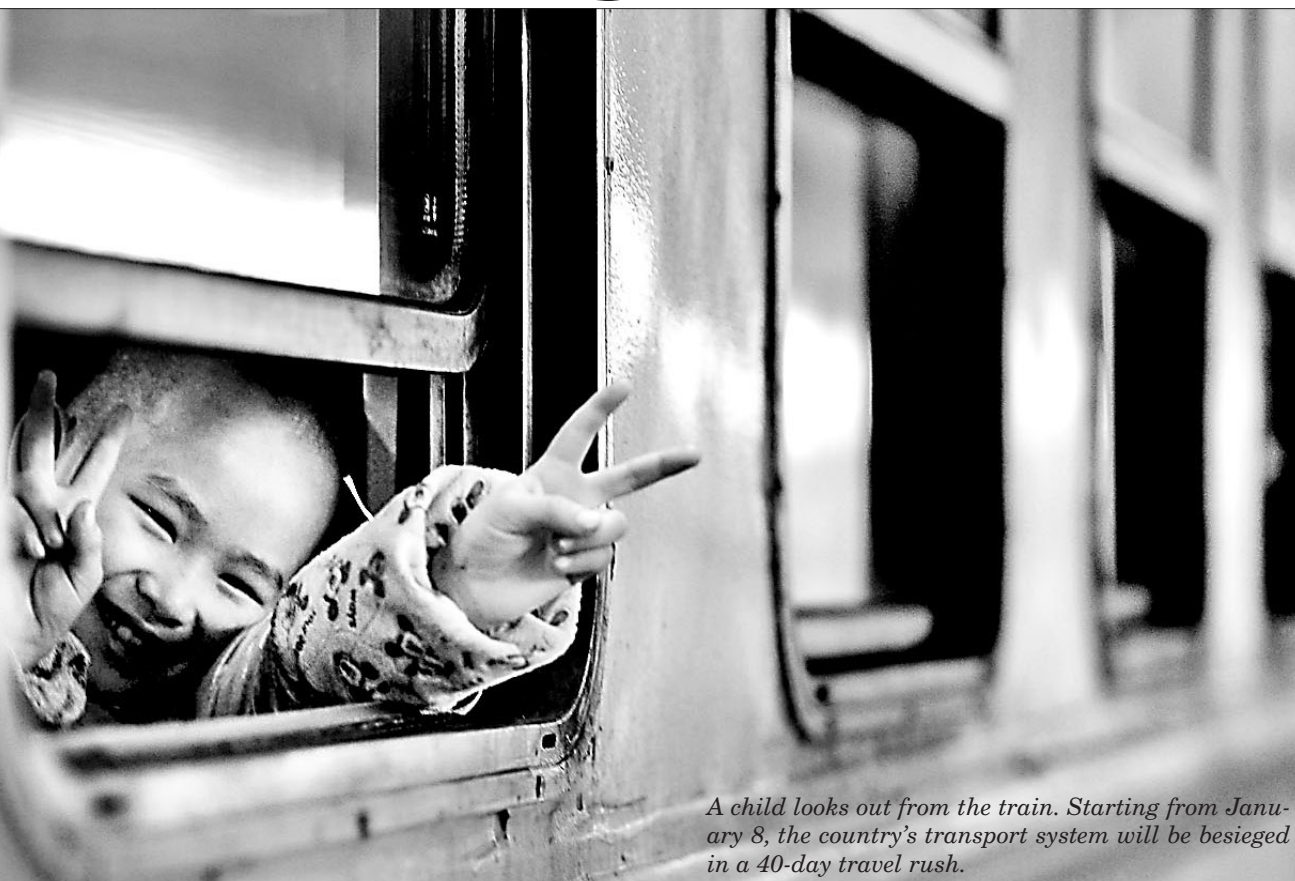
Cover story

By Huang Daohen

The largest seasonal human migration on Earth is underway.

Earlier this week, tens of millions of college students and migrant workers began the search for a way home to celebrate the most important holiday in the Chinese calendar.

According to the National Development and Reform Commission, a total of 3.16 billion passenger trips are expected during the 40-day Spring Festival travel rush, a 9.1 percent increase from 2011.



A child looks out from the train. Starting from January 8, the country's transport system will be besieged in a 40-day travel rush.

## Bandwidth battle

Getting a train ticket during the Spring Festival travel peak has been borderline impossible for the last few years – a fact not lost on the Ministry of Railways.

Among the ministry's new efforts to improve access to train tickets is a new booking system that allows phone and Internet reservations, as well as the issuing of new tickets that are tied to the buyer's name.

Many have lauded the new system for helping to clamp down on scalping, which has made Spring Festival tickets expensive and hard to obtain for many years.

"It sure makes things convenient," said He Miao, a local office worker. "I wanted to book a ticket for January 18, and this time I was able to confirm its availability over the phone and buy it online."

Statistics from the ministry show that a third of the Spring Festival passengers have purchased their tickets through the new booking system, with more than 2 million tickets sold on January 7 alone.

But He was lucky when he managed to log into the booking website, 12306.cn. Many users have complained of frequent crashes and failed reservations. A few users reported having paid through the system only to discover their reservation was never processed.

"I paid 410 yuan for a ticket from Beijing to Shanghai online. When I went to get the ticket, the clerk told me there was no record of the sale," Dong Gua, an Internet user, complained on his Weibo microblog.

Like Dong, many passengers flooded social networking sites to vent their disappointment in the booking system.

"I spent hours trying to access



A man kisses his child being carried by his wife at a railway station in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province.

IC Photos

the site, only to find that tickets allocated for that day were already sold out," said Jiang Xiaoyu, another microblogger.

He, who managed to get a ticket to Shanghai, said the secret to a successful booking is patience.

"You need to be patient when logging onto such a congested website," she said. "I tried for hours to use both the website and telephone hotline to make my reservation, and finally I succeeded," she said.

The ministry said the online ticket system was temporarily paralyzed by the enormous traffic.

The site, which has as many as 10 million registered users, has received more than 1 billion hits each day since January 1.

The ministry vowed to increase network bandwidth to decrease congestion and to issue refunds to passengers whose money was lost by the system.

## Migrants' dream

However, most users of the online booking system are college students and young office workers.

Migrant workers, who find Internet and phone booking expensive and inconvenient, still prefer to go to the station to buy their tickets in person.

"We have no idea how to use the Internet and the phone lines are always busy," said Wu Youcai, a worker looking for a ticket home.

Wu said the system has had one visible effect: it made the lines at the train station much shorter.

On Tuesday morning, fewer than 30 passengers were waiting at each ticket booth. Last year, the number of people waiting in each line numbered in the hundreds.

To help migrant workers buy their tickets, the railway station opened special booths last Sunday.

Wu finally purchased a hard-seat ticket to Chengdu on Tuesday morning. But the 30-hour-trip will not be the end of his journey. After getting off the train, he will take a bus out to a neighboring county and walk for 30 minutes to his village.

Included in his luggage is an electric toy car for his 2-year-old son.

## Taking to flight

This year, more people are choosing to fly than ever before.

According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC), passengers are expected to make about 35 million trips by air during the holiday this year, up 7 percent from 2011.

To meet the massive passenger flow, the ministry also has given the green light for domestic airlines to add 14,000 flights, Xia Xinghua, deputy director of CAAC, said at a recent press conference.

Xia said airlines are running nearly 8,000 flights each day and can carry up to 1 million passengers each day.

But not all those taking airlines are doing so with newfound riches. Some are boarding the airplanes to get around seating limits on their normal train routes.

Among the most widely circulated stories was one about a woman in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province who found the cheapest way to fly to her hometown in Kunming, Yunnan Province was to have an international layover in Bangkok, Thailand.

The story could be apocryphal, but such roundabout trips are nothing new. Many people who are planning to carpool for the new year are having to wind through several cities and transfer to alternate carpools.

The fundamental problem with Spring Festival migration is the nation's huge population, said Jin Lu, a railway expert at Beijing Jiaotong University.

China has 1.3 billion people and only 91,000 kilometers of rails on which to carry them.

"The launch of the online booking and real-name ticketing system may help to curb scalping activities, but tickets will remain scarce," he said



# Young American seeks to help businesses in China and US

By Zhao Hongyi

Jonathan and Danielle Jenkins are young and entrepreneurial, and at first glance, it looks like they have an ordinary business with an office and a website.

But they've added an interesting twist to an old business model. They gather orders from various overseas retailers and then buy in bulk from local factories, thereby letting even small companies in Europe and the US get the "China price."

Along the way, they help struggling Chinese factories that have seen orders decrease in recent years.

They've dubbed their style "online foreign business 2.0."

## New business style lures clients

Yiwu, a coastal city in Zhejiang Province, is the largest production and market base in China of small items such as accessories, gifts, clothes and daily-use products.

It's here that you'll often find a young American donning a hunting cap and backpack. He wanders the market chatting with vendors and producers, learning about the various items on sale.

The man is Jonathan Jenkins, a 29-year-old businessman from the US. He's usually accompanied by his wife, 24-year-old Danielle.

The couple arrived in Yiwu six months ago and quickly set up their business. In July, they began receiving orders from small retailers around the world.

They've taken more than 500 orders on their website, orderwithme.com, mostly for fashion accessories, for a total value of about \$125,000 (790,000 yuan).

"Local Chinese factories issue orders for 50 to 100 pieces," Jenkins said. "But most of the retailers in Europe and the US like to order much less than that."

"Our business is to collect diversified small orders from around the world and purchase in bulk from the factories."

In this way, Jenkins can sell the goods to retailers for much lower prices.

For example, a high quality bag costs about 60 yuan from local factories. It can retail for at least four times that amount in the US.

The orders are diversified and sometimes strange, such as for "any item made of real bamboo fiber," "something that looks like French-style antique furniture" or "quality LV imitations."

"Some businessmen from Dubai, Kenya and Brazil asked me to open a branch of orderwithme.com in their countries," Jenkins said, smiling proudly.

In the meantime, he's helping many small factories in China, many of which have teetered on the brink of closure since the world financial crisis.

Chai Yizhen is an owner of such a factory in Yiwu. Her factory produces women's handbags. She used to receive orders from wholesalers in Brazil, but saw an 80 percent decrease in business last year.

"It was Jonathan's order for 3,000 pieces worth 100,000 yuan that saved my factory," Chai said.

A month ago, TechCrunch Disrupt, an IT venture capital company in the US, selected Jenkins' company among 17 candidates as an investment target. Order With Me won the title "start-up champion" and \$3 million in venture capital.



Jon and Danielle at an Yiwu market.

Photo provided by Jonathen Jenkins.

## Learning from failure

Jenkins may be young, but he isn't new to business. He's learned from a past failure.

In 2006, three years out of college, he went to Shanghai to teach English. During this time, he wrote online software to teach children English.

He invested \$1 million in the project, but Shanghai's authorities cut him off, saying he wasn't allowed to sell online software that targeted students. To this day, he remains optimistic that the restriction will be lifted in the future.

Afterward, he toured sites and cities around Shanghai. Yiwu was among the cities he visited multiple times.

"I found there were many small items, like accessories and clothes, that were being sold for very low prices in the markets in Yiwu," Jenkins recalled.

He quit his job in Shanghai and moved back to the US, where he opened a store to sell fashion accessories.

In the next three years, he made quarterly trips to China – Yiwu, specifically – to purchase items that were hard to find in the US.

But the problem was, he had to buy in bulk to save money – so much, in fact, that he couldn't sell them all. The items began to pile up in his store, which quickly ran

out of space.

It was at this time that he got an idea. Why not start a business in China and purchase for US retailers such as himself?

Jenkins is proud of what he does: he helps retailers in the US and producers in China.

"I always tell [the factories] to label their own brands," he said. "The small accessories are great quality, but they're sold so cheaply and are not branded."

"A product must have a good name, like your child," he said, "particularly when you are exporting your products worldwide."

## Unrivaled, in his mind

The Jenkins were classmates in college. When Jon told Danielle he would go to China to do business, she dropped out of school to join him.

The two married at the bank of West Lake, the most famous spot in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province.

The process hasn't been completely smooth. When Jenkins tried to register his business, local authorities told him that they couldn't give a trading company any tax breaks.

He decided to register his

company as a consulting company instead.

Hangzhou is also the headquarters of Alibaba, the largest business-to-business online retailer in China. But Jenkins doesn't consider Alibaba a rival.

"Alibaba is too big, and it can't offer tailored service to retailers," he said. "We pay particular attention to the quality of the products, particularly in the aspect of environment protection – like, no lead, no nickel and no cadmium."

A number of Chinese businessmen have started similar businesses, such as Light in the Box and Dino Direct.

But "the price they are selling at is comparatively expensive, and we can offer tailored services to our clients," Jenkins said.

He has plans for the future as well, but for now, he's enjoying his success. That failed education software company, for example?

"I'll earn back that money in a few months," he said.



Danielle Jenkins often draws a crowd with her good looks.



# PETA launches anti-fur appeal in China

By Han Manman

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is known for creating controversial awareness campaigns that advocate for animal rights in Europe and the US, but recently the organization turned its attention to the Chinese mainland.

"I used to be a proponent of fur because I didn't know about the abuse and cruelty behind it," said actress Annie Yi, who recently participated in a graphic anti-fur video for PETA Asia.

As images of skinned animals – some still panting and blinking – and scenes of rabbits picked up by the ears and shot in the head with stun guns on Chinese fur farms appear on screen, Yi intones: "Some people think the fur ... from fur farms is humane. But we can't see how they treat the animals. Animals on fur farms spend their entire lives confined to cramped, filthy wire cages ... [then] they are anally electrocuted."

PETA public relations officer Joan Chan said PETA and its affiliates have conducted several undercover investigations of fur farms in China and around the world.

One investigation revealed that rabbits kicked and screamed as they were shot with electric stun guns. Video footage from another investigation showed that workers slammed foxes and raccoons to the ground before skinning them, sometimes while they were still alive.

Chan said when investigators went into another animal market in southern China, they were horrified to find dogs



Protesters from an animal rights group hold a demonstration at a busy intersection in Hong Kong.

IC Photo

and cats being bludgeoned, hanged, bled to death and strangled with wire nooses.

PETA is not the only organization to promote anti-fur in China. A No Fur China campaign was launched last month by ACTAsia for Animals, a UK-based charity set up by experienced animal rights advocates.

More than 50 Chinese animal welfare groups have joined and are supporting the No Fur China campaign. Different groups are conducting events throughout the country.

Statistics from ACT Asia

shows more than 50 million rabbits, raccoons, minks and foxes are kept in dreadful conditions on Chinese fur farms.

According to a report released by ACT Asia, China has become a major producer and consumer of fur, which is most often bought by the younger generation. Items include coats, hats, cushions, bedcovers and other accessories made from pelts. The majority of buyers are unaware of the terrible cruelty involved in raising and killing animals for their fur.

"This shows that our public awareness campaign is desperately needed to stop the huge and growing fur industry in China," the report said.

Chan said there are no penalties for abusing animals on fur farms in China, which is the world's largest fur exporter, supplying more than half of the finished fur garments in the US.

Chan said that in Sweden, PETA's investigators found minks on fur farms suffering from severe psychological distress, spending their days

bobbing their heads and pacing. Many minks even resorted to self-mutilation and cannibalism.

"Just a little fur can cause great suffering to animals," Yi said, adding that many people may not know that about 70 million rabbits are killed yearly for their skins.

"Fur farmers kill rabbits using cruel methods ... stringing them up by the legs and cutting off their heads," she said. "We need to care about other life on earth. They have the right to live."

## Denmark ambassador welcomes more investment from China

By Wang Xudong

The ambassador of Denmark to China said at a recent press conference that his country would welcome more investment from Chinese companies, and for companies to consider making Denmark their first choice, considering the poor economic condition of other European countries.

"Commercial relations between China and Denmark have always been strong, friendly and constructive," said Friis Arne Petersen, Denmark's ambassador to China, in an activity held at the Danish

embassy on January 5.

The theme of the activity was "Ideal Investor Overseas of Chinese Companies," and featured participants from Aigo Entrepreneur Alliance (AEA) and embassy officials.

Aigo is a leading Chinese company of digital products, while AEA comprises different companies in electronics, maritime products, real estate and clothing.

AEA has been trying to create a friendly atmosphere for Chinese companies by making agreements with target countries via negotiations and on-

site investigations.

"Chinese brands will go global only if companies form an alliance," noted Feng Jun, leader of both Aigo and AEA.

He added that the members of the alliance all agreed that Denmark met their requirement for investment, and investing in Denmark itself will make the companies more competitive.

The Danish government always supports investments from overseas and outlaws trade protectionism, Feng said. Meanwhile, Denmark has proved to be a good target country consid-

ering its debt ratio is only half of its GDP, much lower compared with other European countries.

Moreover, Denmark is in a leading position in energy, biomedical and design, the last of which may help Chinese companies close the gap between themselves and the world's leading companies.

"It was, among other things, Denmark's strengths within design and innovation that made the investors decide on Denmark," Feng said.

Last December, members of AEA visited Denmark and were received by Pia Olsen Dyhr,

Denmark's Minister for Trade and Investment. They spoke about rent reduction and free business consulting for Chinese companies in Denmark.

Yin Ziqin, a member of the alliance, said she thinks that AEA has built a platform to make communication more convenient between Chinese companies and the Danish government and Danish companies.

AEA expects to open an office in Denmark in March.

Denmark will hold the EU's rotating presidency during the first half year of 2012.



# Dog trainer offers free advice

By Wu Hao

Every Saturday for the past two months, Dennis Schenk, a professional dog trainer, has been holding free dog training sessions in Shunyi District.

"It's going quite well," said Schenk, a certified canine behavior consultant who's been working with dogs for more than 15 years. "The first time, more than 20 people showed up, and this whole area was full."

"It exceeded our expectations," said his wife, Wu.

Schenk came to China from the US two years ago with the goal of sharing his canine knowledge and experience.

"China has the third largest pet dog ownership in the world, but here pet dog ownership is still new, people don't have much awareness of treating their dog in the correct way," Schenk said. "That's why I came here."

Not long after he arrived, he met his future wife, Wu, who was also a pet lover. She was impressed by Dennis's enthusiasm for dog training and decided to help him pursue his passion.

Schenk said dogs in China are suffering because of their owners' lack of knowledge.

"Chinese are still feeding their dogs dumplings. They kick and yell at their dogs now and then," Schenk said, his face becoming animated. "Every dog is different, just like every child is different. That's another misconception in China. They think dogs are all the same way, with the same psychology."

"In China, dog training happens on a production line: they train your dog, give it to you, get the money, and



Canine behavior consultants say pet problems may have less to do with dog training than owner training.

the owner doesn't get any training," he added.

He said it was owners rather than the dogs who need training.

Schenk wants to make more people aware of how to treat their pet dogs, which is why he offers advice for free. He does this in hopes of reducing abuse and cutting down the rates of dog abandonment, while also creating harmony between owners and their pets both in the house and outside in the community.

Because Schenk is getting busier, he thinks he might have to hold the activity every other Satur-

day in the future.

"But we'll definitely still give free advice if you have any problems," Wu said. "We are looking forward to bringing the event downtown this year."

Where: Euro Plaza, Doctors Beck & Stone, Shop LB05, Euro Plaza 99 Yuxiang Lu, Tianzhu Town, Shunyi District

When: Every Saturday, 2-3 pm

Phone: 13718027490 (English)

13466397349 (Chinese)

Email:

canine\_behavior@ymail.com

Website: chinadogtraining.com

Cost: Free



CFP Photo

## Event

### Happy Year of the Dragon!

The Familier has organized two days of family-oriented Spring Festival activities. On Sunday, both Familier centers will be hosting fun, traditional Spring Festival crafts and activities, such as paper cutting, tang-hulu, or candied hawthorn, making and porcelain painting. The Familier center in 798 Art District will host another activity on January 21.

Where: The Familier Chaowai and The Familier 798

When: January 15 and January 21 (noon - 6 pm)

Tel: 5869 2904 (The Familier Chaowai)

5762 6014 (The Familier 798)

Cost: 50 yuan for adult, 100 yuan for child

### Spring Carnival

The 10th Chaoyang Park International Carnival - Western Temple Fair - will begin soon. Friends from around the world are welcome to participate in the carnival activities, which include selling homemade food and beverages, introducing your country's cultural to visitors and helping visitors in the park. Basic Chinese skills are necessary.

Also, people or groups can take part in the talent show. Each performance can be up to 30 minutes. Lighting, props and other equipment will be provided.

Lunch will be included, and payment offered.

Where: Chaoyang Park, Dong Sihuang Lu, Chaoyang District

When: January 23-28

Tel: Stacey: 15011566041

Mr. Yang: 13699138680

(By Han Manman)

SUBSCRIBE  
to  
BEIJING TODAY  
For  
gift!

Hotline: 010-65902513, 65902534, 65902626 (voice message function is on for 24 hrs)  
Email: bjtoday@beijingtoday.com.cn Web: www.beijingtoday.com.cn

How to  
GET A  
GIFT



a gift card  
worth 200 yuan  
valid as cash  
at Goose & Duck Pub



Beijing Today one-year subscription costs 104 yuan. You can get a Goose and Duck gift card worth 200 yuan. Stocks are limited, so subscribe as soon as possible.





# Children's library schedules during Chinese New Year

By Annie Wei

Although libraries can provide students a nice escape from Spring Festival chaos, most are closed during the break. Here's what you should know before heading to one.

## Peekabook

The biggest library of the lot, it houses 15,000 Chinese and English children's titles in its Haidian store. "Many of the books were brought from the US by the store's founders," said manager Cheng Xin, referring to the Chinese mothers who opened Peekabook in 2005 after spending a few years in the US, where they discovered children's libraries.

The library's three outlets will be closed from January 23 to 29.

## Mohezi Huibenguan

This library has many illustration books for children. It also has tables and coffee for adults.

The library will be closed from January 20 to 31.

Where: 288 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

Open: 10 am – 8 pm

Tel: 8261 8538

Website:

Huicholbooks.com

## Peekabook – Jinsong

Where: 2/F Building 10, Baihuanjiayuan, Shuangjing Dong Qiao, Chaoyang District

Open: Daily except Monday, 9:30 am – 8:30 pm

Tel: 8773 8382



At a library for children

CFP Photo

Email:

jinsong@peekalibrary.org

## Peekabook – Sanyuan

Where: Room F305, Building 10, Phoenix City, Jia 5 Shuguang Xi Li, Chaoyang District

Open: Daily except Monday, 9:30 am – 8:30 pm

Tel: 5866 8064 / 8074

Email:

sanyuanqiao@peekalibrary.org

## Peekabook – Wanliu

Where: Room 302, Building 1, Bishuiyuntian, Wanliu Zhong Lu, Haidian District

Open: Daily except Wednesday, 9:30 am – 8:30 pm

Tel: 8256 7276 / 6324

Email:

wanliu@peekalibrary.org

## Capital Library

The children's section is designed for those 16 and under. It has many children's books in different languages.

The staff has a reputation for being very professional. The library holds many events year-round, including storytelling sessions.

The library will stay open over Spring Festival.

Where: 88 Dongsanhuan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9:30 am – 7 pm

Tel: 6735 8114

## National Library

Its children's section has 22,000 books and is open to young people between the ages of 6 and 16. Readers can apply for a membership card with a valid student ID to check out books.

Because the children's section is relatively new, the staff isn't as experienced as at Capital Library. The library said its holiday schedule has not been finalized.

Where: 33 Zhongguancun Nan Dajie, Haidian District

Open: Weekdays 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 8554 4114

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

Do you know of a company in Beijing that offers storage facilities? I want a place that's reliable and not very expensive.

Check out cangku88.cn – it offers storage lockers all over Beijing, from downtown to suburban areas.

What formalities are required in order to marry a Chinese national? What permits are needed? Is an interview with a government agency necessary?

Foreigners who wish to marry a Chinese citizen need to obtain a form called the "Letter of Eligibility to Marry" from their home country. This document basically says there is no legal reason preventing the person from marrying. Some embassies can issue this. The information should be available on your embassy's website. Then you and your potential spouse need to register at the public security bureau where he or she is registered.

Can international magazines be delivered to addresses in China?

You can't subscribe to international publications through China Post, but you can try the China National Publications Import and Export Corporation.

Where: 16 Gongti Dong Lu, Chaoyang District  
Tel: 6506 3082

My friends and I plan to visit Harbin this winter. I know it'll be freezing, but we don't want to spend a lot of money on expensive winter jackets. My Chinese friends said a People's Liberation Army coat is cheap and will keep you warm. Is that true? Where can I find them?

Yes, PLA coats are quite heavy and warm. You can try the army surplus Junyongpin Zhuanmaidian at 17 Shibaidian, Chaoyang District (tel: 6748 8925). There is another shop on Xizhimen Bei Dajie, south of Xueyuan Nan Lu. You can also find a smaller one on the west side of Hepingli Xi Jie, south of Third Ring Road.

(By Wei Ying)

# Snow carvivals welcome visitors

There are plenty of places hosting snow carnivals downtown during the Chinese New Year, like the Summer Palace, the National Stadium, and Beijing Kuangbiao Leyuan, a speed-sport zone in Haidian District.

## The Summer Palace

Where: 19 Xinjian Gongmen Lu, Haidian District

Open: 9 am – 5 pm

Tel: 6288 1144

Cost: 30 yuan, including 10 yuan as entrance fee

## Beijing Kuangbiao Leyuan

Where: 1 Nan'anhe Lu, Sujiatuo town, Haidian District

Open: 9 am – 5:30 pm

Tel: 6245 5588

Cost: starting from 240 yuan

## The National Stadium

Where: Jia 3, Anding Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – 9 pm

Tel: 8498 68888

Cost: starting from 160 yuan

(By Wei Ying)



Beijing Kuangbiao Leyuan organizes not only skiing but other outdoor sports.

CFP Photo



# Artists fork expo after



By He Jianwei

The 4th Asia Art Expo, one of Beijing's largest art events, opened at the China World Trade Center. More than 700 artists from 15 countries, including Korea, Iran, Pakistan, Hong Kong and the mainland, participated.

But this year, the attention was less on the art and more on the artists. Sixteen Chinese artists withdrew from the expo after their works were rejected. In protest, they held a three-day exhibition of their works that were declared "unwelcome" by the expo organizers.

While many saw the dispute as one about artistic freedom, it was also about artists of pulling a publicity stunt.

**C**old winds whistled through the alleys of 798 Art District last Friday, but the atmosphere was burning hot.

Artists, critics and media groups gathered to hear what the 16 artists who walked out on the Asian Art Expo during its first day would present.

"This was an unexpected exhibition. It seems more like a cultural event than a simple showing," said Liang Kegang, one of the curators of the exhibition. "Although the exhibition was curated just 64 hours before opening, the 16 participating artists have been preparing for it for months."

On November 12, expo curator Wen Wenwu made a phone call to one of the artists, Shao Yinong, and asked him to invite some artists to attend this year's expo.

"Wen said he has long admired my works and writings, and he agreed with the way I choose to create. He said he hoped contemporary artists who appreciated the roots of Chinese culture could also attend the expo," Shao said.

Shao and his wife Mu Chen are a famous team, taking pictures to illuminate how a conservative agricultural society has been propelled in only a few decades into an economic superpower. In their series "Assembly Hall," they show the ancestral halls that were used as public meeting places several decades ago, and which are today being left to ruin.

The next day, Wen met Shao and 15 other artists at G-Dot Art Space in Songzhuang, discussing which works to show at the expo. One week later, they met again and decided on a list of the artists and their works.

Everything went smoothly until January 1.

On that morning, Wen's assistant Li Zhigang called Shao's assistant Shi Rulan. On the phone, Li told Shi that the works by Ren Zhitian and Ji Zhou could not be exhibited at the expo, but refused to state a reason for the rejection.

Among Ren's rejected installations was a big red star made up of five wooden dowels. Although he is a contemporary artist, Ren prefers to use traditional materials in his creations, especially ink. He believed that it is not necessary to translate Chinese concepts into a foreign art language, and that artists should express themselves directly through Chinese concepts of art.

Ji Zhou's work in the exhibition is a photo from his "Mirror Image" series. Ji's understanding of pho-



Curator Gu Zhenqing (second from left) and art collector Uli Sigg (third from right) at 798 Space

tography never remained as an individual narrative of reality or the depiction of public and social landscapes. What he is most interested in is the appreciation of visual perspectives and to challenge the audience's observational abilities.

Li also told Shi that some of the pieces submitted by other artists were not appropriate to transport, specifically, the piece

Wu Junyong and Guo Gong were too large, the one by Ji Huai and Wu Daxin were too heavy and the one by Wang Guangle was too fragile.

"Shi told the expo's decision to Shao and me. But we believed they gave us an unreasonably short time to replace the works," Guo said. "We thought if these artists could not attend the expo, it was meaningless for us to show up."

Seven artists withdrew their own approved works as a gesture of solidarity.

On the afternoon of January 1, Shi received an email from Li. "The Asian Art Expo is regretful that these

The 4th A



# er bitter row

largest art fairs, ended this past Sunday at the galleries and individuals from Japan, South mainland attended the four-day show. he art than disputes. he expo because some of their works were exhibition at 798 Art District showing the expo organizers. ut freedom of creation, some accused the



Asia Art Expo ended this past Sunday.

CFP Photo

ins  
ation  
ction  
and-  
ore  
opre-  
pec-  
e the  
es of  
  
e  
five  
t  
ort:  
es by  
es by  
by  
  
oth of  
he to  
nine  
ss for  
ks as  
email  
e 16

artists made a decision to withdraw from the expo," the announcement said.

"It is rude that the expo made such an announcement and gave no room to maneuver," Guo said. "On January 2, we went to the expo to see the curator Wen, but we were told that the decision had already been finalized and could not be changed, so we decided to start our own exhibition."

The exhibition opened on January 2 and ended with the Asia Art Expo, whose organizers accused the angered artists of hijacking the event's name for self-promotion.

"We totally disagree with the expo's decision, which brought us great shame. We were forced to withdraw by the expo. No artist can create a new, good installation in only two days. I called the curator dozens of times, but he always gave me the same answer: 'I cannot do anything about it.' It was the organizer's indifference that angered us," Shao said.

Renowned curator Gu Zhenqing supported the artists and became one of the curators of their exhibition. "After 30 years of social transition and cultural change, individual artists have developed great creative energy and more opportunities," Gu said. "The expo's arrogant announcement is indefensible. We created this exhibition to exhibit those 16 artists who were thrown out of the pack. The exhibition itself is a response for the sake of art."



Blue Memory by Ma Shuqing



Upper Architecture by Gao Weigang



A Tree by Guo Gong



Melted Columns by Huang Yan



Red Star by Ren Zhitian



Mirror Image by Ji Zhou



East Wind West Wind by Shao Yinong and Mu Chen

Photos provided by Li Space



# The painter with a thunderstorm in his heart

By Charles Zhu

Michiko Kakutani, an American Pulitzer Prize-winning critic for the *New York Times*, recommended *Van Gogh: The Life* by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith as one of the 10 best books of 2011.

In the biography of this Dutch painter, who might be commended like the French painter Eugene Delacroix as having “a sun in his head and a thunderstorm in his heart,” the authors raised doubts about the conventional hypothesis of his suicide at the age of 37.

Though people commonly believed that the tormented artist shot himself, Naifeh and Smith say the hypothesis has problems: the angle of the shot, the disappearance of the gun and the long walk that the shot Van Gogh would have made to his house, to name but a few.

They propose a different theory: a rough teenager named René Secrétan, who took a fancy to a cowboy costume after seeing Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, was possibly the source of the gun. The gun might have been sold or lent to him by a local innkeeper. Secrétan and his hooligan friends used to tease Van Gogh for his odd mannerisms, arguably caused by epilepsy.

The authors believe that there was some encounter between the painter and the boys on the day of the shooting.

“Once the gun in René's rucksack was produced,” they write, “anything could have happened – intentional or accidental – between a reckless teenager with fantasies of the Wild West, an inebriated artist who knew nothing about guns, and an antiquated pistol with a tendency to malfunction.” They also argue that the painter might welcome “the escape that he longed for but was unable or unwilling to bring upon himself, after a lifetime spent disavowing suicide as ‘moral cowardice.’”

While critics say that there is no hard and convincing evidence for this theory, it does not prevent the minutely detailed biography from



**Van Gogh: The Life**

By Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, 976pp, Random House, \$40

being one of the best ever of the Dutch painter. It interprets his life and art and records his struggles with depression, his iron will in the face of incessant rejections, his willingness to learn other artists' techniques and the drama-packed evolution of his work.

In addition to David Sweetman's succinct 1990 study, it chronicles the ups and downs of Van Gogh's life of solitude and despair.

In a short span of just 10 years, there came a great wealth of brilliant and dynamic paintings that would shock the world in later years. He created a flurry of uniquely different images that would “say something comforting as music is comforting – something of the eternal” such as

glittering stars in the yellow moonlight; brilliant irises flowering in a lush garden under the sun; crows flying over a golden field of wheat under a stormy sky.

This book tries its best to avoid simplistic conclusions and base its writing on hard work in the study of the development of his ideas, his techniques and his extraordinary ability to learn lessons from other painters and try to utilize their innovations.

The authors exhausted archival material and scholarship at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and intensively scrutinized Van Gogh's letters to understand the artist's mind. These letters not only chroni-

cle his emotional ups and downs, his creative process and his ties with his brother Theo, but also testify to his literary gifts and his tenacious wish to become an artist.

Based on these letters and Van Gogh's drawings and paintings, the authors make a detailed explanation of his intellectual mind, his philosophy and his art. They argue that although he suffered breakdowns and depression, Van Gogh was far from a madman. He had been well groomed in literature and art through his reading of Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare, which helped shape his vision as an artist.

It is believed that Van Gogh's works of peasants were inspired by Millet, and that he wished, as the authors say, “to celebrate not just the peasants' oneness with nature” but also “their stolid resignation in the face of crushing labor.” With an iron will to learn, he also got tremendous influence from the Impressionists in his landscape paintings and the use of colors. He was also indebted to the pointillism of Seurat, Japanese prints and the Symbolists' imagery.

The authors relived the creative life of Van Gogh in the artistically fermentative Paris of the 1880s and tell how he evolved from his intensive study of light on surfaces to more intense search of his own mind, from realist copying of scenes to a more expressionistic style that showed his own “fanatic heart.”

The world of art should be thankful for a book that offers insights into how Van Gogh's free-wheeling use of color corresponded with the various states of his moods such as the vibrant yellow sunflowers, the serene violet, lavender and lilac and dynamic blues and ominous clouds in the eulogy of benign or threatening nature.

Van Gogh once revealed his mind when he said, “What I draw, I see clearly,” adding, in drawing, “I can talk with enthusiasm. I have found a voice.” He indeed found a unique voice and a unique way to express his unique art.

## Timezone 8 book listing

Timezone 8 is a Hong Kong-based publisher, distributor and retailer of books on contemporary art, architecture, photography and design. This week, it recommends three upcoming titles to *Beijing Today* readers.

**Before and After Superflat: A Short History of Japanese Contemporary Art 1990-2011**

By Adrian Favell, 216pp, Blue Kingfisher Limited, \$24.95

This book offers the first comprehensive history in English of the Japanese art world from 1990 up

to the tsunami of March 2011, and its struggle to find a voice amidst Japan's economic decline and China's economic ascent.

**Wei Jia: Dim Light on The Opposite Shore**

By Wei Jia, 106pp, Blue Kingfisher Limited, \$50

The paintings of Chinese painter Wei Jia often reference his youth spent in the theater where his father worked: solitary figures appear split against a gloomy background. In this volume, reproductions of pages



from Wei's sketchbooks reveal his working process; detail plates permit the viewer to examine his delicate brushwork up close.

**Tao Na: Displaced**

By Tao Na, 109pp, Blue Kingfisher Limited, \$29.95



Tao Na reinvents the square as a formal constraint, envisioning it not as a vehicle for color, but as the ubiquitous pixel of the digital age – the building blocks of modern images. This is the first publication on her work.

(By He Jianwei)





Zhang Ciyu

By Zhang Dongya

Last Saturday, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art held a screening of *Pear*, a film by Zhang Ciyu, based on a novel by Shen Congwen.

Independent film critic Zhang Xianmin praised the young filmmaker for taking a "romanticist" view of the classic story in his adaptation.

"Actually, that is the very word I would have used to describe myself," the filmmaker said.

“The person who returns from working in the city may not be the one you remember.”



The husband takes his wife for an outing, but the distance between them is obvious.

# Romanticist's hometown film emulates novelist



1. The wife stares at the rotten pear in the fishbowl.

2. The husband carries a full basket of pears to visit his wife, who works in town.

Photos provided by UCCA

Xiangxi, in northwestern Hunan Province, is famous as the hometown of writer Shen Congwen.

The 30-year-old director Zhang Ciyu was also born in Xiangxi and considers Shen a personal idol.

During his postgraduate work at the Beijing Film Academy, Zhang decided to shoot a film based on one of Shen's short stories titled *Husband*.

Originally penned in 1930, *Husband* tells the story of a village man who has to send his wife to work as a prostitute in the city to support the family. The experience of city life deeply influences the wife, changing the way she speaks and dresses and distancing her from her husband. The novel ends with her returning to the countryside.

While Zhang followed this basic structure, he added many elements of his own creation. He decided to shoot the film in Wangcun, a hamlet of Jishou, a city in Xiangxi. All the actors who participated were locals.

In the film, the couple owns a good house in the village – one of the new two-story buildings that stand out from common cottages. To support the family and complete the decorations on the new house, the husband sends his wife to find work in the city.

Pears are used throughout the film as a common symbol. The husband picked pears from a high tree he planted. He creates a tool to knock the pears down from the high branches one by one so he can take them to his wife in the city.

Throughout the film, people are occasionally seen eating the pears the husband

brings. The couple recalls their village life while eating pears.

However, city life changes the wife and begins to affect the couple's relationship. At the end of the film, the husband sells the remaining half-basket of pears at a low price and returns to the village. He keeps only one pear for his wife, though it rots in her absence.

One of the most moving scenes of the film shows the wife staring expressionless at the rotten pear. The long take was selected for the film's promotional poster.

The original novel ends with the warm scene of the couple's reunion. The husband throws away the money his wife brings back and cries like a child, asking her to return to the village.

Zhang chose a more open ending. The wife becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby. "The child is the hope. I couldn't say for sure whether the family would reunite or crumble," Zhang said.

The director wanted to shoot the ending with a snow scene, but there was no snow during the winter during the year *Pear* was filmed.

The film is tied together by its somber tone. All the actors give a plain performance, free of anger, sorrow or happiness.

"I prefer tranquil but thought-provoking scenes. I try my best to offer an open film. For many events in the film, I did not give a conclusion. The audience will have to decide for themselves what happens," Zhang said.

Like his idol Shen Congwen, Zhang plans to create more works set in Xiangxi.



# Chinese medicine and recycled clothes

By Annie Wei

We scouted some new and interesting products this week that will ease your mind and body.

## Reuse unwanted clothes

Brandnü, the city's fair trade store that sells handicrafts made by rural women, is always a place to look for unique things.

Its latest project involves designers Zhang Nan (her brand Fake Natoo is available at [fakenatoo.taobao.com](http://fakenatoo.taobao.com)) and Sarah Yun making products from recycled clothes. Some of the proceeds go to non-profit organizations.

After six months of preparation, Brandnü's first batch of recycled products is available. They have casual, mix-and-match and street style, starting from 180 yuan for a laptop case and 600 yuan for a top.

### Brandnü

Where: 61 Wudaoying Hutong, Dongcheng District  
Open: noon – 10 pm

Tel: 15011153421  
Website: [brandnuproject.com](http://brandnuproject.com)



Brandnü's redesigned recycled clothes

Photos provided by Brandnü

## The magic of wormwood

In winter, many women, especially those who work long hours in front of a computer and lack exercise, find that their muscles become flabby.

According to traditional Chinese medicine, it's because your circulation slows down when the temperature drops.

The best remedy is to take a hot bath or get a massage to relax tightened muscles.

To improve the result, you can add wormwood leaves to your bath or try wormwood therapy.



Wormwood can improve one's circulation and well-being.

Wormwood is an inexpensive but powerful herb (20 yuan for 10 rolls from most traditional Chinese medicine stores). While burning it, its aroma can penetrate your skin and boost circulation – if you don't mind the strong smell.

Using it 5 to 10 minutes per day can improve your facial

skin tone and ease eye circles.

You can find smokeless wormwood (10 yuan for five rolls) and different sizes of knits for burning (starting from 25 yuan).

Website: [shop59448622.taobao.com](http://shop59448622.taobao.com)



## Leung's natural therapy

The vendor Leung Sihong is from a family of traditional Chinese medicine practitioners. Leung is also an aroma therapist certified by the International Federation of Aromatherapists.

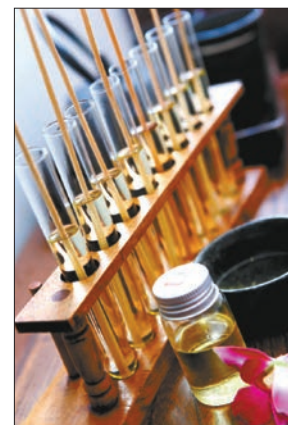
The online store sells not only essential oils made from Leung's personal recipes, but also tea ware and plant containers designed by another traditional medicine practitioner.

We recommend her hand-made vanilla and coconut lip balm (59 yuan for 16 grams), made of organic ingredients without additives.

The store's essential oil products are made after an order has been placed to ensure all ingredients are as fresh as they can be. It takes two to four days to prepare.

The store's herbs and teas are worth a try. The herbs are from the provinces of Guizhou and Yunnan. Teas include jasmine flower (35.6 yuan for 100 grams), flower tea with detoxing function (90 yuan for 125 grams) and wild black tea (370 yuan for 100 grams).

Website: [store.taobao.com/?shop\\_id=33940908](http://store.taobao.com/?shop_id=33940908)



Quality essential oil products and tea are available at Leung's Taobao store.

CFP Photos





Yannick Alleno, French chef of a Michelin three-star restaurant

## New cafe with bagels

By Annie Wei

The Rug Cafes at Lishui Jiayuan, near the south gate of Chaoyang Park, has become the new go-to place for weekend brunch.

Its signature items are original, onion, sesame and poppy seed bagels (12 to 19 yuan), paired with garnishes (10 yuan) like peanut butter and cream cheese.

Its homemade pancake (58 yuan), made of organic eggs, is highly recommended. The pancake takes 20 minutes to prepare and comes

out fluffy, soft and tasty. The homemade taco (48 yuan), cheesecake (38 yuan) and double chocolate cake (48 yuan) are also good choices.

A cup of cappuccino or latte costs 30 yuan and a simple salmon salad costs 80 yuan, but you can expect quality here. The salmon salad comes with Brie cheese, which is normally only used in fine dining



Salmon salad, 80 yuan



Bagel, 19 yuan; peanut butter, 10 yuan

restaurants.

Apart from simple foods and afternoon tea desserts, the cafe also offers full meals such as its steak (198 yuan for 227 grams, 266 yuan for 340 grams): 21-day fermented tenderloin steak with spinach, stir-fried potato chunks, sea salt, black pepper and special sauce.

The cafe has a relaxing and cozy ambiance: a glass wall and wood floor and ceiling. Apart from using organic ingredients, the cafe also promotes a low-carbon lifestyle. Most of

their ingredients are purchased locally.

**The Rug Cafes**  
Where: 1st floor, Building 4, Lishui Jiayuan, opposite south gate of Chaoyang Park

Open: 11:30 am – 10 pm; closed on Mondays

Tel: 8550 2711

Photos by Zhou Baoling

## Luxury dining in western part of town

By Annie Wei

The opening of S.T.A.Y. last September at Shangri-la Hotel gave the western part of the city, better known for its college district and dive bars, a taste of international fine dining.

S.T.A.Y., which stands for Simple Table Yannick Alleno, is the brand of a chef of a three-star Michelin restaurant.

Every season, Alleno flies in to prepare a new menu. He recently discussed with his staff a variety of black truffle dishes that will be available in the spring.

Oyster in gelee with leeks and black truffles is a creative update of a traditional French starter – fresh oyster with lemon juice. It features two fat oysters on black truffles and cream puree, topped with gelee and leeks and in bed of sea salt.

As truffles have become a rare and expensive ingredient in many restaurants, some will use Yunnan truffles instead of French ones. But not at S.T.A.Y., because food never lies.

The celery cream soup with black truffles is a dish that will bring out the best in truffles. French truffles can be cut into thin pieces, while Yunnan ones cannot.

The sea scallops terrine with black truffles is delicately made: many layers of scallops with sliced truffles. The light and tender flavor of scallops enhances the truffles. If you prefer something more classic, try Australian beef sirloin Aiguillette with black truffle sauce. The truffle aroma makes the beef more delicious.

Duck foie gras stuffed cabbage and black truffle is highly recommended for its great combination of texture and flavors.

S.T.A.Y.'s desserts are a perfect way to finish a meal. Its milk chocolate in crispy dark chocolate tube with shaved black truffle tastes smooth, milky and yummy!

**S.T.A.Y.**  
Where: 29 Zizuyuan Lu, Haidian District

Open: Monday to Saturday, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm, 5:30-10 pm; Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm

Tel: 6841 2211 ext. 6727

Cost: Average 1,000 yuan per person



Milk chocolate in dark chocolate tube with shaved black truffle



Celery soup with black truffles



Australian beef sirloin Aiguillette with black truffle sauce



Oyster in gelee with leeks and black truffles



Duck foie-gras-stuffed cabbage and black truffle



Sea scallops terrine with black truffles



Traditional French snack

Photos by Zhou Baoling



## Dinning

### T.G.I. Friday's opens concept restaurant in CBD

A new concept restaurant by T.G.I. Friday's opened last week in Beijing's central business district. This new restaurant offers Chinese consumers healthy options and a richer dining experience.

Located in Chaoyang District, north of the World City, the restaurant can seat 200 guests. In dishes, dining and service, Friday's offers a dynamic, relaxed and happy atmosphere. The new restaurant maintains its distinctive American design and embodies modernity and fashion.

T.G.I. Friday's has been in business for 46 years and has thousands of restaurants all over the world. In 1995, Friday's



opened its first restaurant in Beijing. As of 2012, it now operates five locations in the capital.



### Lover's day at Café Swiss!

Café Swiss is setting the stage for an unforgettable romantic Valentine's evening at Swissotel Beijing.

A candlelight specialty buffet dinner is waiting for you and your loved one to celebrate this special night in a most romantic way. It will also host a special raffle sure to surprise every couple with its prizes.

Valentine's chocolate truffles will be available at the Swiss Deli from February 7.

Where: Cafe Swiss, Swissotel Beijing, 2 Chaoyangmen Bei Dajie, Chaoyang District  
When: February 14, 6-9:30 pm

Cost: specialty buffet for singles 328 yuan sans beverages; specialty buffet for



couples 588 yuan sans beverages (16 percent gratuity).

Tel: 6553 2288 ext. 2127

Email: office.beijing@swissotel.com

## Event

### Mahjong workshop

Mahjong is a game of skill, tactics and calculation played by locals on the street, in the home or in Mahjong teahouses. Despite its nationwide popularity, the rules tend to vary from region to region.

However, the basics are easy to learn and very exciting. With a little bit of stealing, skilful tactics and luck, a four-player Mahjong game is never dull.

Local Beijing mahjong experts will discuss the cultural background of the game and its popularity in the capital, as well as teach some of the secrets to winning.

In the first session you will learn the history and symbolism behind the game; following sessions will put your skills to the test against local Beijingers who are hard to trick!

Just like visiting the Great Wall or eating Beijing Roast Duck, playing mahjong is one of the must-dos of a Beijing experience.

The workshop will be held in English and is divided into two sessions. Every registrant will go through the beginner to intermediate courses over two weeks.

Reservation is required.

Where: Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng District

When: January 15 and 22, 10 am – 1 pm; February 19 and 26, 10 am – 1 pm

Cost: 200 yuan per session (2 courses) (160 yuan for Culture Yard students)

Tel: Registration and inquiry 8404 4166

Email: workshop@cultureyard.net

(By Jackie Zhang)



### Foreign designers join Amazing Wedding Academy

Amazing Wedding Academy, founded last December, invited award-winning designers Preston Bailey, David Beahm, Denis Reggie and Joe Buissink to join its team of experts from this year. They will introduce the latest international trends in wedding design and provide professional suggestions to Academy's Chinese clients. Preston Bailey is renowned for working with celebrities such as American television host Oprah Winfrey and actress Jennifer Hudson.

(By Zhang Dongya)



### Celebrate the Year of the Dragon

Lunar New Year festivities will begin at Grand Millennium Beijing with a thunderous welcome for the Year of the Dragon by its management team.

## Hotel



# Fri, Jan. 13

## Dance African Footprint

South Africa's longest-running musical and dance group first performed in front of Nelson Mandela and world leaders on Robben Island in 1999. This group will take the audience on a journey through Africa's his-

tory, culture and spirit using traditional gumboot dance, hip-hop and modern ballet.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Center Theater, 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-880 yuan

Tel: 4006103721



# Sat, Jan. 14



## Nightlife Wan Xiaoli

Wan, considered one of China's top folk rock musicians, was born in 1971 in Hebei Province and began playing the harmonica and guitar at a very young age. While employed at a liquor company, he spent his spare time playing with local troupes. He left his hometown for Beijing when he was 26. After singing in pubs for five years, he won a contract with a rock label.

Where: Mako Livehouse, 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 80 yuan advance purchase, 100 yuan at the door

Tel: 5205 1112

## Nightlife Hell City

This new local punk band released its debut album, *Welcome to Hell City*, this month.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9:14 pm

Admission: 50 yuan advance purchase, 80 yuan at the door

Tel: 6402 5080



# Sun, Jan. 15



## Movie Song and Moon (2011)

Since graduating from high school, Xing has lived a peaceful life in her hometown – an ethnic Dong village. When Fei, the young man she secretly loves, returns from the city with a bride named Lu, Xing becomes crestfallen. But Lu doesn't get along with her mother-in-law, so

she leaves. When Fei wants to go after her, Xing decides she'll follow – if only her grandpa will let her.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm

Admission: 40 yuan

Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8001

## Concert China Philharmonic Orchestra and Five Colors Hulunbeier Children Choir

Director Yu Long and the China Philharmonic Orchestra will perform with a children's choir from Inner Mongolia, which was founded in 2007 with

children from different ethnic groups between the ages of 5 and 13.

Where: Century Theater, 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-880 yuan

Tel: 6417 0058

# Tue, Jan. 17



## Exhibition The Desire of Plants – The Solo Exhibition of Tu Hongtao

Hu's previous works dealt with the subjects of invasion and the relationship of humans to their urban surroundings. His new works discuss the relationship between humans and nature. Born in 1976, Hu impressed the art world with his realism.

Where: Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 19, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 9531

# Mon, Jan. 16



# Wed, Jan. 18

## Concert Arcadi Volodos Piano Recital

Born in St. Petersburg in 1971, Volodos is celebrated as a "keyboard genius." He will play Schubert's Sonata A Minor, Brahms' Three Intermezzi and Liszt's Sonata in B Minor.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-400 yuan

Tel: 6436 8998

# Thu, Jan. 19



## Movie Mt. Tsurugidake (2009)

Set at the end of the Meiji Era (1868-1912), this historical film tells the true story of a survey team that endured great risks to map Mt. Tsurugidake in the Japanese Alps in the early 20th century.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 5900 9473

(By He Jianwei)

15

Next week

Editor: He Jianwei Designer: Deng Ning

BEIJING TODAY



# Travel back to the age of steam

By Zhang Dongya

In west Qianwei County in Leshan City, Sichuan Province is a throwback town where a steam train runs every day. The sound of the locomotive's clatter will instantly take you back in time.



The steam train is operated manually; staffers use whistles and flags to send signals to the train's operators.

CFP Photos

## Half-century of history

The steam train runs on a length of track that is nearly 20 kilometers. The track gauge is 76.2 centimeters – half that of a modern railway gauge.

It's affiliated with Jiayang Coal Mine, which was founded in 1938, the earliest Sino-British joint venture company in Sichuan. In its 50 years of operation, the train has transported 20 million tons of coal and carried about 14 million passengers.

An employee said the train had two or three passenger carriages behind the freight carriages in the 1960s; starting from 1978, passenger and freight carriages were separated. In the early 1990s, with the opening of a new coal mine, the track became a special railway line, and the train became a commuter line for locals.

For those living in Shixi Town around the new mine, the steam train is the only transportation passing in and out of the mountainous area. In 2006, a line was opened for tourists.

## Preserved steam train

Steam trains are relics of a bygone era: very few remain around the world. As a result, the Jiayang train has attracted visitors from different countries.

It's said that foreigners first discovered the train through satellite pictures of moving clouds in Leshan City. They later discovered that these clouds came from the train's steam.

The small railway station is old. It has retained its ancient slogans and some instructions on the walls. The train is operated manually, employing people like brakemen. Staffers use whistles and flags to send signals to the train's operators.

"The mini steam train is now only used for transporting passengers. Normally, the steam locomotive only needs repairs every two or three months. It'll have no problem running another 20 years, I think," one employee said.

Running on the narrow track, the ride can be a bit bouncy at times. While turning and on slopes, passengers have to clutch their armrests. But locals who are used to it laugh and talk, even through the shrieking brakes. One senior passenger said he has taken the train for decades and never heard of an accident happening.

"My first job is selling tickets, and I also give passengers some safety instructions. But I have a more important job: brakeman assistant. Beside the door of each carriage is a brake, and we have to assist the engine driver to brake when going downhill," one conductor said.

Students take the early train to go to school and back. Sometimes, you'll even see poultry and livestock on board. When locals go to the fair in Shixi Town, they will purchase some poultry and farrow for

feeding. It is common to see pigs and cattle on the train.

The carriages are blackish green, and have been fitted with wooden seats. The glass windows remain open, ideal for picture-takers.

## Train scenery

The train has seven passenger carriages, each with 20 seats. The route includes many turns and steep slopes. Some slopes are steeper than those along the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. A roundtrip takes about two and a half hours. There are nine stops, four specifically for sightseeing.

The scenery is beautiful along the

way. The railway was built around the mountain and passes through many tunnels. Visitors can view precipitous hills and layers of terraces from the train. In deep canyons, there are forests of Cyathea trees – living fossils from the age of dinosaurs.

Small villages are dotted along the railway, with fields and cottages. The best spots to take pictures are at the Plantains Ravine, Big Turn in Caizi Dam and Bee Rock. When the train stops at Liangshuituo Scenic Spot, visitors can get off to view the train blowing out steam.

In March, there is large area of golden cole flowers; in April, tung trees begin to blossom, which will turn the area snow white. Any picture you take will turn out wonderfully.

The terminal Bagou is a residential area that gathers the earliest villagers. Locals there live a simple and slow-paced life.

## Travel information

**Getting to Jiayang:** Take a flight or train to Chengdu; the fast train takes 27 hours. Take a bus from Xinnanmen Bus Station (departs at 3 pm) to Jiayang. Or head to Leshan first and transfer to a bus, which departs at 2:30 pm from Leshan Lianyun Station. From Jianwei County, there are buses to Jiayang every 10 minutes.

## Train schedule

Four trains daily at 7 am, 10:30 am, 2 pm and 5:30 pm.

Ticket: 20-50 yuan

## Tips

1. Since the train goes through a mining area, visitors are advised to wear a hat and sunglasses. The coal dust can get very heavy.

2. Experienced visitors say to sit on the side where the steam is blowing so that, on a lucky day, you'll see a rainbow through the steam.

## Accommodations

There are many hotels and guesthouses. During peak season in the spring, accommodations will be more expensive. Lodging at Bagou is recommended. Jiayang Guesthouse, which is in Bagou, has standard rooms starting at 100 yuan.



A new line for tourists. People can view the outdoor scenery while riding.



The small railway station has been operational for nearly 50 years.